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ABSTRACT

Culturally diverse minority groups make up 40 percent of America's deaf and hearing-impaired school population but only 14 percent of special education teachers. In addition, 90 percent of deaf students have parents who can hear, and one-third reside in rural areas. Although they are primarily Euro-American, hearing, and untrained in deaf education, teachers have the primary responsibility for exposing culturally diverse deaf children to their ethnic roots and their deaf culture. The Personal Culture Form allows teachers to explore cultural variables related to values and behaviors, sense of group membership, experiences of minority status, and transforming life events in the contexts of family, neighborhood, community, school, and individual student. Cultural brokers such as parents, other family members, community members, and minority-group school personnel should be called upon to help the teacher fill in the form and discuss the cultural variables. The Curricular Strategy Form can be used for generating educational strategies to address those variables that are not shared across contexts. Six steps explain how to use the forms, and a case study of an American Indian deaf child of hearing parents demonstrates how knowledge of a student's cultural background is used to make learning relevant and enhance parent and family involvement in the school. The two forms are included. (SV)

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EXPLORING THE PERSONAL CULTURES OF RURAL CULTURALLY DIVERSE STUDENTS

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There is a growing appreciation among scholars and school personnel that awareness of the characteristics which distinguish cultural groups can increase effectiveness in working with children and adolescents served by special education (Baca & Cervantes, 1989; Bailey, 1989; Chamberlain & Medinos-Landurand, 1991; Correa, 1992; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990). It has been suggested that without such awareness, misperceptions and miscommunications between the teacher, the student, and the student's family may occur resulting in poorer classroom performance and impaired parent-school relationships (Chamberlain & Medinos-Landurand. This is particularly true for deaf students who may be members of more than one cultural group and isolated from any one of the groups (e.g., Hispanic and Deaf; Native-American and Deaf) (Christensen, 1993).

Indeed, students who are Deaf and African-American, or Deaf and Asian, or Deaf and Native American, or Deaf and Hispanic seldom encounter teachers who are even Deaf let alone Deaf and representative of their ethnic/racial group. It is significant to note that while culturally diverse groups make-up 40% (i.e., African-American-17%, Hispanic-16%, American Indian 1%, Asian /Pacific 4% and others 2%)) of America's deaf and hard-of-hearing school population (Gallaudet Center for Demographic Studies, 1994), only 14% of the special education teaching professionals represent those cultural diverse groups (Cook & Boe, 1995). Added to the dilemma of an imbalanced teacher-student cultural ratio is the reality for deaf students that more than 90% percent of their parents are hearing (Gallaudet Center for Demographic Studies) and one third of them reside in rural school attendance areas (Silver , 1986). Thus, the primary responsibility then falls upon rural teachers (most of whom are Euro-American and hearing and not trained specifically in deaf education) to expose deaf, culturally diverse children to their ethnic roots and their Deaf culture, while facing limited resources and long distances between schools and services (Helge, 1980).

Teacher's Roles in the Identification and Use of Cultural Diversity

Exploring cultural groups, according to Phinney (1996), requires that three dimensions of ethnicity be addressed, including: (a) the cultural values, attitudes and behaviors that characterizes ethnic groups; (b) ethnic identity or the subjective sense of ethnic group membership; and (c) the experiences associated with minority status, including powerlessness, discrimination, and minority status. She also suggests that political, economic, and historical factors are also relevant components of ethnicity (i.e. sociopolitical context). Moreover, Phinney

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(1996) acknowledges that these components are overlapping and confounding, but they can be separated conceptually for purposes of discussion, examination, and intervention (See figure 1).

Curricular Adaptation

After exploring a student's personal culture teachers need to generate strategies for adapting the curricular methodology and content in the context of the cultures of all assigned students. The question is what aspect of the curriculum does one adapt? A recent presentation by Deaf adults speaking before a class on Multicultural Issues in Deafness at New Mexico State University may help in deciphering the types of adaptations needed. These individuals all shared a common thread among their needs--(a) the need to know about their heritage (hearing and deaf); (b) to know about their religions whether Christian, Judaism, Shinto, Animism, Taoism, Confucianism or Buddhism and to participate; (c) to know about their ethnic communication styles and social mores; as well as (d) to know celebrations and observances whether Kwanzaa or Quinceñiera, Christmas or Hanukkah; Easter or Id al-Ada; and (f) to have role models who share their ethnic or racial heritage and deafness. Presenters were asking for methodologies and culturally relevant curricular content that are appropriate for culturally diverse student populations.

Application of the Personal Culture Framework

Having accepted the paradigm of Personal Cultures influenced by family, neighborhood, vicinity/community and school; and having further accepted the paradigm of a framework in which to record the various influences; how can a teacher put the information from the personal culture to work in the classroom?

Cultural Brokers

The exploration of students' personal cultures requires the use of "cultural brokers" (Correa, 1989). These brokers are individuals who provide a bridge between cultures can be used as informants, mediators, and/or advocates. As cultural brokers, they can share information regarding cultural values, attitudes, and behaviors; issues related to group membership; experiences associated with minority status; and transforming life events. Depending on the situation, parents, other family members, or members of the community may act as cultural brokers (Correa, 1989). They may be found within the school: bilingual educators, English as Second Language specialists, migrant educators, Chapter 1 teachers, and staff. Functionally, the use of a cultural broker requires that the teacher discuss all of the variables in the *Student's Personal Culture Form* with as many brokers as possible

Steps for Applying Framework

Following are the six steps used in applying the *Personal Culture Framework* which includes the use of the *Student's Personal Culture* and *Curricular Strategy Forms* with the cultural broker(s (See Figures 1 & 2)..

Step 1: Based on information gathered from cultural broker(s)/informant(s) and research, the teacher writes down key words/phrases to complete each cell in the *Personal Culture Form.*

Step 2: The teacher circles the variables on the Personal Culture Form which are NOT SHARED across the five locus columns: (a) family, (b) neighborhood, (c) vicinity/community, (d) school, and (e) child.

Step 3: The teacher then lists the variables not shared in the first column of the *Strategy Form.*

Step 4: The teacher then circles the Loci which do not share the variable in column 2 of the *Strategy Form.*

Step 5: Teacher and cultural broker(s) generate strategies for addressing these NOT SHARED variables within the four dimensions. These curricular strategies are written in column 3 of the *CurricularStrategy Form.*

Step 6: Strategies are then encorporated into students' IEPs and curricular methods and content.

Garcia and Malkin (1993) advocate that the goals and objectives on a child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) should specify responsiveness to cultural and linguistic variables. Instruction then should: respond at the student's instructional level, to expectations of the family; and be sensitive to culturally-based responses to the disability; include a language use plan; and address language development.

To demonstrate the application of the *Personal Culture Framework*, a case study/vignette is presented. Following the vignette are examples of how the cultural variables may be incorporated into the framework.

Case Study

Imagine the subject you are about to meet is in the your classroom What would you need to know about your student and his/herr family to make learning relevant and to ensure that information from their personal cultures are incorporated into your curriculum content and methods, and that the information from your student's personal cultures are used to enhance parent/family involvement with the schools?

Deaf Child of Hearing Parents--American Indian Heritage

The student in question is deaf (bi-lateral profound loss), the parents are hearing. There are no other known family members who are deaf. The parents have had no experience with Deaf adults. Several students from the reservation attend the State

School ;for the Deaf. The parents are professional artists/craftsmen and make silver and turquise jewiery which they sell at Indian Markets. They live on the reservation The child is enrolled in a regional day program for the hearing impaired. Forty percent of her education is within a special class for deaf students with mainstreaming services (e.g., interpreters) for selected courses 60 % of the day.. The reservation (neighborhood) is rural and remote. The special class for hearing impaired students is not located in the nearby town. It is located in a larger urban community which hosts the regional special education protgrams.. The child is bused daily. The community surrounding the reservation is predominantly of Euro-American descent and middle to low socio-economic status. The teachers ir the regional program for the Deaf are Ero-American One instructional assistant in the program is deaf. She graduated from the State School for the Deaf, but she is also Euro-American descent.

Student's Personal Culture

Completing the *Student's Personal Culture* form (Figure 1), the teacher and brokers (mother, bilingual specialist, Johnson-O'Malley Cooradinator --who is himself American Indian, and the classroom assistant) identified the variables **not shared** among the child and her school, family, immediate neighborhood, and vicinity/community were (a) **demograhpic influences** -- family and immediate neighborhood reside on a reservation with unique housing,and isolation; (b) **verbal behaviors**-- only -spoken English by the schools and business establishment except for the special class for the hard of hearing and deaf hich uses English and some American Sign Lnaguage. On the reservation English and Navajo are spoken. (c) **nonverbal behaviors**-- eye contact is integral to the Deaf culture at school for grammer and inflection in signs. Eye contact is disrespectful among the Native American Tribe, (d) **religious/spritual and temporal orientation**--differs noticably. Religious affilitations in the larger community outside the reservation are limited to scheduled times and days. For the family and neighborhood, religious practices permeate the lives of the residents--celebrations are held on an "as needed basis--feast days do not follow the western calender. Children may miss much more school than the Euro-American counterparts;. (e) **Other variables** identified as different by the cultural brokers were **dominant ethnic identify, generational contect, decsion-making processes, observations,** and **family definition.** Last but not least were the **transforming life events**-for the parents, giving birth to a profoundly deaf child.

Curricular Strategies

The teacher completed the *Student's Personal Culture Form* with cultural brokers. The findings revealed that the child, family, and neighborhood share a number of cultural variables, but the child differs from the family and neighborhood due to **verbal and nonverbal** language (e.g., need for formal ASL, expressive faces, eye contact, and pointing for ASL). High affect, eye

contact, and pointing are in conflict with Tribal communication styles and mores. Parents asked that Trival social mores also be taught along with Deaf Culture and language. Speical events for American Indian Children at the school and at the Reservation Indian Center are to involve the student. Use of interpreters will be utilized when involved with hearing students and communicty members.

Regarding **dominant ethnic identify**--to respond to strong family identity with the Tribal heritage, the parents also offered to bring tribal customs to schoo that are not sacred.. Teachers are asked to continue to work with the family and Johnson O'Malley staff to have them serve as cultural brokers to share religious/spiritual affiliation, observances, ceremonies, leisure activities, attire, and foods. Tribal Information not sacred is to be incorporated into class thematic teaching. For example, when teaching about houses, structures are to include hogans, and pueblos and tepees. Similarly, when teaching about dance, ceremonial dances are to be included. Class trips to the reservation are planned for feast days For **verbal and nonverbal** variables, ASL clearly requires pointing for pronominalization. The school provided parents information on alternative communication modes. The mother and father have chosen ASL in spite of the conflict with Tribal mores. The parents and child are to be put in contact with the Inter-tribal Deaf Council (IDC) in a distant city. Interpreters for Native Americans are to be sought. **Experiences associated with minority status** are to be addressed also. For example, American holidays which present the European view are also to be viewed viewed from the Native American's perspective (e.g., Columbus Day, Feast Days) within the curriculum. Vocabulary to explain tribal events and items and jewelrey making are to be shared on vido tape with the the parents so that they might share information spontaneously with their daughter during "teachable moments." Literature and children's stories from the Native American tradition are to be incorporated into story telling time. The Deaf adult mentor/classroom assistant will given Native American Folk Lore in order to be able to tell the stories in ASL.

Suggestions for Teachers

Beyond the application of the *Personal Culture Framework Form*, it is suggested that teachers become familiar with the cultures included in their school and community--this allows one to identify materials, strategies, and resources that are inclusive of the students taught on a regular basis. Teachers are asked to update the information annually to void sterotypic information. Sources used should acknowledge within-group differences. Educators are asked to obtain information that is beyond holiday/tourist curriculum. Historical experiences, migration pattern, accomplishments of members of the group, values, belief systems, and communication styles are to be included(Garcia & Malkin, 1993). To incorporate racial and ethnic cultures with the Deaf culture, teachers should contact ethnic Deaf organizations (e.g., Inter-Tribal Council of the Deaf, Asian Deaf Conference, Hispanic Deaf Conference, Black-Deaf Advocacy). Computer literacy skills with the Internet and World Wide Webb afford teachers access to information that is contemporary and up to date from online libraries, bulletin boards, or chat rooms.

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Figure 1

STUDENT'S PERSONAL CULTURE FORM						
Student's Name:		L	O	C	U	S
DIMENSIONS	CULTURAL VARIABLES	Family	Neighborhood	Vicinity/ Community	School	Child
Cultural Values, Attitudes and Behaviors	Demographic Influences (urban, suburban, rural)					
	Verbal Behaviors (the what, how, when , where and why of language)					
	Nonverbal Behaviors (show of affection, meaning of common facial expression/ gestures, use of space)					
	Achievement Orientation / Education Level					
	Temporal Orientation (past-, present-, future-oriented)					
	Thinking/Cognitive Processes					
	Religious/Spiritual Affiliations					
	Leisure Activities (recreation, sports, hobbies, stress relievers)					
Sense of Group Membership	Dominant Ethnic Identity (country of origin, national affiliations, ethnic density)					
	U.S. Generational Context (first-, second-, third-generation, etc.)					
	Socio-economic Status (low, middle, high)					
	Decision-making/ Action-taking Attitudes					
	Observances (holidays, celebrations, ceremonies)					
	Family Definition (influence of family/kin)					
Experiences Associated with Minority Status	Sociopolitical Context (immigration pattern, resident status, experiecnes with racism)					
Transforming Life Events	Normal Events (developmental transitions)					
	Critical Events (traumatic events, illness, surgeries)					

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Figure 2

CURRICULAR	STRATEGY	FORM
CULTURAL VARIABLES	LOCUS F=Family N= Neighborhood V=Vicinity/Community S=School C=Child	STRATEGIES
	F N V S C	
	F N V S C	
	F N V S C	
	F N V S C	
	F N V S C	
	F N V S C	
	F N V S C	
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